

Metaphors in Kapampangan

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1. Introduction

This paper discusses metaphors in Kapampangan, especially describing those metaphors for ‘understanding’ and related expressions. The framework used in this paper are metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This paper also gives detailed lexicographic descriptions of lexical items related to ‘understanding’, and argues that Kapampangan shows some uniqueness as compared with other Philippine languages.

2. Metaphor studies in major languages

Studies of metaphors and rhetorics have a long history. Cognitive studies of metaphors have exploded since Lakoff and Johnson’s very influential work (1980). There has been a plenty of literature on metaphors in English and other major languages. In this section, we look at some case studies (Nabeshima 2004, Matsui 2010).

Languages such as English and Japanese have some common metaphors for understanding. In the following, metaphors are presented in small capitals. Examples of English and Japanese are taken from Nabeshima 2004 and Matsui 2010, some of which are originally from Lakoff and Johnson 1980.

UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING

- (1) I see what you’re saying.
- (2) It looks different from my point of view.
- (3) Hanashi ga mie-nai.
story NOM come.into.view-NEG
The story cannot be seen (= cannot understand the story).
- (4) Mondaiten ga ukabiagaru.
problematic.issue NOM rise.up
A problematic issue emerges.

UNDERSTANDING IS CATCHING/GRASPING

- (5) I don’t quite catch the idea.
- (6) The concepts were difficult to grasp.
- (7) Sakki itta koto, henna fuuni tor-anai-de ne.
little.while.ago said thing strangely take-NEG-GER PRT
What I said a little while ago, don’t take it in a strange way (= Don’t misunderstand it.)

- (8) Imi o shikkari tsukamu koto ga juuyoo da.
 meaning ACC firmly grasp thing NOM important COP
 It is important to grasp the meaning firmly.

UNDERSTANDING IS EATING/DIGESTING

- (9) They ate the lesson up.
 (10) It'll take some time to digest that information.
 (11) Kamikudai-te setsumei shite-kure.
 chew.up-GER explanation do-give.IMP
 Explain (the issue) plainly.

Turning to less-studied languages, there are very few works on metaphors of such languages, with some exceptions, e.g. Palmer et al. 1999 (emotion metaphors in Tagalog) and Casad 2003 (conceptual metaphors in Cora, a Southern Uto-Aztecan language of Mexico).

In Kapampangan, 'understanding' is expressed metaphorically by words like 'to dive deep' or 'to thrust deeply with a spear or spear-like object'. The following section describes rich idiomatic expressions for understanding, and explores how metaphors for 'understanding' are organized in Kapampangan.

3. Kapampangan

In this section, we look at Kapampangan metaphors and related expressions.

3.1. Metaphors for understanding

It is noticeable that, in order to express the concept of 'understanding', Kapampangan speakers use very different metaphors from those in English and Japanese shown above.

UNDERSTANG IS DIVING DEEPER

- (12) E ke atarúk ing sasabian na.
 NEG ERG.1SG/ABS.3SG understand DET.SG saying ERG.3SG
 I don't understand what he's saying.
 (13) E ke atarúk a sasabian.
 NEG ERG.1SG/ABS.3SG understand LK saying
 I don't understand what he's saying.
 (14) Tarúkan me.
 understand ERG.2SG/ABS.3SG
 Understand it.

TARÚK [Bergaño (1732, etc.): TARÓC], as a noun, it refers to the depth or bottom of a body of water. As a verb, it means to fathom, to test the water's depth with the use of a bamboo pole, to dive or plunge deep and reach the bottom (Bergaño 1860: 63-64; 2007: 387). The

expression *Tarúkan me* therefore literally means ‘test its depth’ or ‘dive to the bottom’. It is the most common metaphor used in reference to understanding something deeply. Idiomatically TARÚK [TARÓC] is also defined according to Bergaño as ‘to test someone’s talents’ (intellect) in order to see if ‘he is *mabábo* (‘shallow’ = ‘unwise’) or *malálam* (‘deep’ = ‘wise’); or if he is *alán cataróc* [alâng katarúk] ‘he has no equal in depth (‘wisdom’)’. Kapampangan Poet Laureate Amado Yuzon of Guagua is known to favor using this expression. A famous line in his poem *Talimhaga* reads *Lihim yang malálam a e mu átarucan* (Manlapaz 1981: 256). Edna Zapanta Manlapaz translated this as ‘It is a deep mystery that cannot be fathomed’ (Manlapaz 1981: 257).

(15) Malálam ya. E ke átaruk.
 deep ABS.3SG NEG ERG.1SG/ABS.3SG understand
 He’s too deep. I can’t understand him.

(16) Malálam ya=ng manialítâ (magsalítâ).
 deep ABS.3SG=LK talk
 His words are deep.

(17) táu=ng malálam
 person=LK deep
 deep (= wise) person

(18) Malálam ya=ng táu.
 deep ABS.3SG=LK person
 He’s a deep person.

(19) Malálam ya=ng mísip.
 deep ABS.3SG=LK think
 He’s a deep thinker.

(20) Mabábo ya=ng táu.
 shallow ABS.3SG=LK person
 He’s a shallow (= unwise) person.

LÁLAM, as an adjective it means ‘deep’ (Bergaño 2007: 197) i.e. ‘debajo’ (Bergaño 1860: 128), but not only referring to physical depth, but also as ‘being deep’ or ‘profound’ (Bergaño 2007: 197), i.e. ‘profundo’ (Bergaño 1860: 128).

FAILING TO UNDERSTAND IS DROWNING

(21) E ka maki-tuktúkan buntuk kareng táu=ng malálam
 NEG ABS.2SG PREF-knock head DET.OBL.PL person=LK deep
 úling póta malúngud ka.
 because might drown ABS.2SG
 Don’t argue with deep persons because you might drown.

KABALDÚGAN, the Kapampangan word for ‘meaning’ is in itself a metaphor.

- (22) Malálam ya kabaldúgan.
 deep ABS.3SG meaning
 It has a deep/deeper meaning.

It comes from the word BALDUG which means ‘to let fall’ or ‘to drop from above’ (Bergaño 2007: 60). Bergaño further offers the sentence *Nanutang cabaldugana* [*Nánu tang kabaldúgan na*] as an explanation and defines it simultaneously to mean ‘What thing was dropped where?’ and ‘What does it mean?’ A paragraph from Pangilinan 2001 will further explain why KABALDÚGAN means ‘meaning’ in Kapampangan:

Understanding something is likened to dropping a stone into the still and calm waters of the lake. As it submerges, the stone generates a ripple on the surface. The ripple widens, allowing room for a new ripple to form within it, which in turn also widens to allow room for a new ripple to form within it. The cycle goes on. Ripples within ripples are generated as the stone plunges deeper and deeper into the bottom of the lake. *Kábang lalálam at lalálam ya kabaldúgan, luluálas at luluálas ka aintindian* (‘As the meaning of something deepens one’s understanding of the truth widens’).

3.2. Related expressions for understanding

INTINDI

Like many of the ethnolinguistic groups colonized by the Spaniards within the Philippines, the Kapampangan language also use the word INTINDI in everyday conversation to mean ‘understanding’ or ‘to understand’. It comes from the Spanish word *entender* (Panganiban 1972: 560).

TALASTAS

This is the indigenous Kapampangan word for ‘understanding’ or ‘to understand’ and appears in Bergaño (2007: 369-370) as such. It is still in use among Kapampangans living in the delta region or *Maúlî*, especially in Sasmuan, Lubao, Macabebe and Masantol, and even among the Kapampangan speaking Aitas of Porac and Floridablanca. In the urban centers of Angeles and San Fernando however, TALASTAS has come to mean ‘to announce’ or ‘to express’, like in the words *manalastas* ‘herald’ or ‘announcer’ and *patalastas* ‘announcement’ or ‘advertisement’. It is very similar to the current Tagalog definition of the same word. In Macabebe and Masantol for instance, an ‘advertisement’ or ‘notice’ is also called *patalastas* but with the context of ‘something that needs to be understood’ and a *manalastas* is ‘someone who explains things’ or ‘help people understand’ what is being reported or announced.

TALUS

Among the Kapampangan people living in upland region or *Pangúlu*, TALUS seems to be the indigenous Kapampangan word for ‘understanding’. Kapampangan lexicographer Venancio Q. Samson (2011: 720) defines this independently of Bergaño as ‘to comprehend, to understand, to be well aware of’. Bergaño (2007: 374) simply defines TALUS as ‘to pass through, like an arrow, as sword’, ‘to pierce with a sword’ or ‘to pass through swiftly like a boat down a river’. Bergaño however included the expression *Matalus yang mangamánu* as ‘one who has command of language’. Manlapaz translated TALUS as ‘to learn’ (Manlapaz 1981: 185) rather than just ‘to understand’ in a line in Belarmino Navarro’s poetry entitled *Sá-rî-sá-rîng Penandit* (Manlapaz 1981: 180): “*Qñg é mu dit mang sasarián, átalus méng alâng súlit*” (Manlapaz 1981: 184) ‘without you intending it, you learn it without effort’ (Manlapaz 1981: 185).

TALÚSÉ

This word appears many times in the works of old Kapampangan writers where it was understood to mean ‘understanding’ or ‘to understand’ (Manlapaz 1981). For instance, Crissot (Juan Crisostomo Soto) of Bacúlud (Bacolor), the Father of Kapampangan Literature, wrote in his novel entitled *Lidia* the sentence *E cu bálung pitalusen* (Manlapaz 1981: 236) which Manlapaz translated as ‘I cannot understand’. The word is used in several forms by a number of authors. Modern Kapampangan poet Belarmino Navarro of San Fernando used the word TALÚSÉ in the line *Wári’t ngéni ing payul mu lubus ku nang atalúse* (‘As if now I truly understand your counsel’) in his poetry entitled *Bílang Mángutang Kú Mû* (Lacson 1984: 99-100). Literally, the word is an adjective which probably means ‘hydrodynamic’ or something that moves swiftly across the waves. Bergaño (2007: 375) offers the definition of TALÚSAY (the old form of TALÚSÉ) as ‘to be smooth from stern to prow’ obviously in reference to a boat.

MULAT

Samson (2011: 485-486) defines MULAT as ‘to be aware’ and ‘to understand’. Bergaño (2007: 244) however simply defines MULAT as ‘to open the eyes’. However, every Kapampangan understands MULAT as Samson defines it. Kapampangans further distinguish MULAT from MULÁGAT, which both mean ‘to open the eyes’. MULAT is more of an ‘awakening’, a spiritual experience rather than a physiological action. The late Kapampangan painter Perfecto Mercado who specializes in ‘dreamscapes’ differentiates this in these words: *Ing Kamulatan iyapin ing pámagmulágat da ring mata ning kaladdua at alî ning katauan*. This translates to English as ‘Enlightenment (KAMULATAN) is the opening of the eye of the soul and not the body,’ where MULAT is ‘to open the eye of the soul’ and MULÁGAT is ‘to open the eye of the body’.

3.3. Proverbs

Vedasto Ocampo gives the following Kapampangan proverb (Ocampo 1985: example 431).

- (23) Eca pa-ilunud qng capatac a danum.
NEG.ABS.2SG CAUS-drown DET.OBL.SG drop LK water
Literal translation: Don’t try to drown yourself in a drop of water.
Free translation: Don’t mind trivial things.

Ocampo’s example pertains to ‘understanding’. Truth is understood to be huge, deep and infinite like the deep waters of a pond or a lake (Pangilinan 2001). To drown oneself in a glass of water or in just even a drop means to fail to understand the main essence of what is being understood because of focusing on the minor details and accidents. It is somewhat equivalent to the English expression ‘to lose the bigger picture’ or even ‘to get sidetracked’.

The current version of the above example is this one below:

- (24) E ka pa-ilúngud king métung básu=ng danum.
NEG ABS.2SG CAUS-drown DET.OBL.SG one glass=LK water
Don’t drown yourself in one glass of water.

As in the above explanation, this happens when one fails to understand the main idea by diving too deeply into the trivial, insignificant or even irrelevant details.

Another common expression is the following:

- (25) Melúngud ya king métung a básu=ng danum.
drowned ABS.3SG DET.OBL.SG one LK glass=LK water
He drowned in a glass of water.

This expression refers to people known to be wise or intelligent but somehow fail to understand simple things that ordinary people seem to understand so well, like a rocket scientist who fail to understand the experience of falling in love.

4. Comparison with other Philippine languages

Based on experience, the Tagalog and Cebuano languages also have the metaphor *malalim* and *ladlum* respectively. The Kapampangan word LÁLAM, an adjective that means ‘deep’ is LALIM in Tagalog, hence the metaphor *malalim* and LALUM in Cebuano-Bisaya (Panganiban 1972: 598), hence the metaphor *ladlum*. However, this metaphor seems to apply purely to understanding lexicons, like in the expression *malalim na Tagalog* (‘deep Tagalog’) and *ladlum nga Binisaya* (‘deep Visayan’) in reference to words that are not commonly used in every day conversation. The concept of depth in Tagalog and Cebuano-Bisaya seem to indicate something that is ‘hidden from the surface’ or ‘something not so obvious’ and therefore ‘rare’ and ‘uncommon’. It does not seem to have the same context in Kapampangan where depth is equated to wisdom or understanding. The Kapampangan expression *ing táung malálam* (‘a deep person’ = ‘a wise person’) seem to have no equivalent in Tagalog or Cebuano-Bisaya.

The Tagalog expression *Malalim siyang mag-isip* (‘He is thinking deeply’) does not mean the same thing as the Kapampangan expression *Malálam yang mísip* even if they match literally word for word. *Malalim siyang mag-isip* (‘He is thinking deeply’) in Tagalog means someone who is always lost in his own thoughts and has become oblivious of his surroundings. The Kapampangan expression *Malalim siyang mag-isip* is understood to mean ‘He is a deep thinker’ and therefore refers to a ‘wise man’ rather than someone who has plunged deep into his own thoughts and left the surface reality that surrounds him. The Tagalog metaphorical concept of ‘depth’ tend to border on the psychological rather than the intellectual, where one plunges deeply into another world, the world of thought, and neglects his surroundings, the world on the surface or reality, whenever he is *nag-iisip ng malalim* (‘thinking deeply’).

The Kapampangan expression *Malálam yang mánialítâ* (‘He speaks deep words’) means that a person is speaking words of wisdom. His choice of vocabulary may be simple and easy but his message carries a lot of weight and has a deeper significance beyond the surface or literal meaning of the words themselves. The Tagalog expression *Malalim siyang magsalita* (‘He speaks deep words’) refers to a person who cannot be readily understood because he uses vocabularies that are unusual in everyday conversation, most likely archaic or belonging to a particular jargon or dialect.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have presented a variety of metaphors and related examples for ‘understanding’ in Kapampangan. The analysis of metaphors in English and other major

languages is already a well-developed field of study, but “claims of the universality of metaphorical concepts cannot be validated until further researches have been completed in other languages” (Palmer et al. 1999: 172). This paper is an attempt to exemplify the diversity of how metaphors are conceptualized in various languages, by looking at Kapampangan (and Tagalog and Cebuano) metaphors for ‘understanding’.

Abbreviations

ABS - absolutive; ACC - accusative; CAUS - causative; COP - copula; DET - determiner; ERG - ergative; GER - gerund; IMP - imperative; LK - linker; NEG - negation; NOM - nominative; OBL - oblique; PREF - prefix; PL - plural; PRT – pragmatic particle; SG - singular

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